

## **Assessing a Newborn's Drug-Exposure**

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Several families who come to the Department's attention are mothers who disclose taking buprenorphine at the delivery of their newborn. While buprenorphine can be prescribed, it can also be purchased illegally and abused to the point of impairment. Some hospitals do not screen mothers and newborns for the presence of this drug, but an increasing number of hospitals do.

Buprenorphine is a commonly prescribed drug for medication-assisted recovery from opioid addiction. Non-pregnant women are often prescribed Suboxone (the brand name for a version of buprenorphine that contains naloxone, commonly referred by its brand name, Narcan), and pregnant women are often prescribed Subutex (the trade name for buprenorphine that does not contain Narcan).

### **Strategies and Supports:**

If a newborn's drug screen, mother's urine drug screen, or other screen (e.g. samples collected from blood, the cuticle bed, or hair follicle) is positive for buprenorphine and naloxone, the mother is likely taking Suboxone. If a screen is positive for buprenorphine but not naloxone, the mother is likely taking Subutex. If buprenorphine and/or naloxone are not mentioned in the results, it is likely they were not screened for, so child welfare professionals may want to conduct additional interviews and/or request additional screening.

In addition to reviewing the results of drug screens, looking at pharmacy and prescribing provider records will help clarify the distinctions in which drug is being used.

This information is critical to accurate assessment, as noted in the FAST. If you have questions or concerns about a drug screen you have received, DCS' Safety Nurses and Regional Health Unit Nurses are available for consultation.

### **Example:**

A CPS Case Manager (CM) was investigating an allegation of drug-exposure. The mother (alleged perpetrator) was negative for all tested substances upon admission to the hospital, but she admitted to prescribed Subutex use. The mother and infant were released from the hospital with no concerns, and case tasks revealed no further concern either. Pharmacy records verified the mother's prescription for Subutex. The newborn drug screen was returned several days into the case and was positive for buprenorphine and naloxone. Not understanding the difference between Subutex and Suboxone, the CM closed the case. A week later, a new case opened, due to the mother's illegal substance use, which had only escalated since the baby's birth. In reality, the mother had been abusing Suboxone to the point of impairment and had been selling her Subutex prescription.